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*Dialectic Differences between Assyrian and Babylonian, and some Problems they Present.* — By S. C. YLVISAKER, Ph. D., Luther College, Decorah, Iowa.

The proof of the existence of the two quite distinct dialects, the Assyrian and the Babylonian, has been arduous but also gratifying. The texts upon which the proof is based, the collection of letters from the period of the Sargonide kings, edited by Prof. Harper, fall naturally into two groups: the letters written in the Assyrian script and those written in the Babylonian. Even a hasty comparison of the letters in the Assyrian script with those in the Babylonian cannot but reveal certain peculiarities in the one group which are not found in the other, and a more detailed and thorough study makes it apparent that these differences are of five kinds, such as concern phonetic laws, inflection, syntax, the use of words, and style. Permit me to make brief mention of the main differences under these five heads.

I. As regards phonetic laws, the Assyrian makes a sharp distinction between the palatals, the Babylonian does not—Assyrian: *iktibi*, Babylonian: *iktabi*. The Assyrian pronounces the *š* as *s* and the combination *št* regularly becomes *s* or *ss*; the Babylonian has retained the *š* and before a dental this regularly becomes *l*—Assyrian: *asakan*=*aštakan*, Babylonian: *altakan*. The Assyrian frequently assimilates an *m* to a following *t*, the Babylonian softens the pronunciation of *k* or *t* after *m* or *n* to *g* or *d*—Assyrian: *attaḥar*=*amtahar*, Babylonian: *amdaḥar*. The Assyrian experiences no difficulty in the pronunciation of a double sonant, the Babylonian resolves the combination and simplifies the pronunciation by means of an *n*—Assyrian: *imagur*=*imaggur*, Babylonian: *imangur*. In the Assyrian two neighboring vowels are frequently assimilated to each other—*iḥabbutu*=*iḥabbatu*, while vowel contraction is a prominent characteristic of the Babylonian.

II. Inflectional differences there are many of, but referring to the summary on page 73 of my monograph entitled "Zur babylonischen und assyrischen Grammatik", I shall mention only a few more important ones. In regard to the inflection of nouns it is to be noted that the Assyrian regularly has *u* as the ending of the nominative and accusative singular, *i* as that of the genitive, while the Babylonian by its irregular use of the case-endings would seem to show that these were no longer in use. In regard to the verb, the Assyrian forms the Piel and Šafel Imperatives and Permansives by means of *a* in the first syllable, the Babylonian has the usual forms. So the Assyrian *šabbit*, Babylonian *šubbit*; Assyrian *gammur*, Babylonian *gummur*; Assyrian *šebil*, Babylonian *šubil*, etc. But the difference appears in minor matters as well, as f. inst. in the treatment of certain verbs. The Assyrian present of *nadānu* is *iddan*, the Babylonian *inamdan* or *inamdin*; the Assyrian preterite is *iddin*, the Babylonian *iddan* or *iddin*; the Assyrian imperative is *din*, the Babylonian *idin*. The first t-form of *nazāzu* in Assyrian is *ititiz*, in Babylonian *ittasiz*. The Assyrian treats the verb *idū* "to know" as a ʾD verb, the Babylonian as ʾD. And so on.

III. The syntactical differences are also quite marked, the use of the enclitic *ni* in dependent clauses being characteristic of the Assyrian, the use of the overhanging vowel in dependent clauses and of the enclitic *ma* characteristic of the Babylonian. Here there are also minor points of difference such as the idiomatic use of prepositions, etc.

IV. Closely connected with the syntactical differences are those involving the use of words. It cannot be by mere chance that the following words are used only in the Assyrian letters: the pronouns *ammu*, *mēmēnu*, *īamutu*; the verbs *našū* and the defective verb *laššu*; the prepositions *issi*, *battibatti*, *battatai*; the adverbs *udini la*, *ulā*, *umā*, *ammaaka*, *annaka*, *annurig*, *arhiš*, *issuri*, *atā*, *bādi*, *basi*, *ḥaramme*, *kallamāri*, *kittu*, *lidiš*, *mā*, *muk* and *nuk*, *šīāri*; *šaddagdiš*, *timāli*, *tūra*, and the following only in the Babylonian: the pronoun *agā*; the defective verb *īanu*; the prepositions *alla*, *itti*, *ultu*; and the adverbs *adū*, *ul*, *umma*, *arkaniš*, *arkišu*, *bani*, *ḥantiš*, *madē*, *mindēma*, *minamma*, *šaddagiš*. In the case of some of these words the subject-matter may, of course, have had more to do than is at present apparent.

V. All of these peculiarities taken together and coupled again with the individuality of the writer in each case would undoubtedly help us to explain the difference in style which one cannot but notice in the letters. But they would hardly explain all, and I think we would be justified in distinguishing between an Assyrian and a Babylonian style as well. However, this question of difference in style is intimately associated with a detailed study and comparison of syntactical constructions in the two dialects, and in this field very much still remains to be accomplished.

To summarize: If we could have heard the two dialects, Assyrian and Babylonian, spoken, I do not doubt that we would have noticed a difference more marked than that which exists among the various dialects in Germany. We would undoubtedly do better in choosing the sister languages Norwegian and Swedish for comparison: the Swedish, soft and musical, representing the Babylonian, the harsher and more strongly accented Norwegian representing the Assyrian.

In itself the knowledge of these dialectic differences between Assyrian and Babylonian is interesting enough to the philologist, it is important also in several respects: 1) it furnishes a very necessary key to the understanding of the epistolary literature; 2) it explains to our entire satisfaction difficulties of Assyrian grammar which otherwise would cause much trouble. As I have said before, there is much left to be done, both as regards the material already at hand, and what is steadily being published; but even at this stage we have a right to say that the importance of our knowledge of these dialectic differences will extend beyond the points I have mentioned. It shows us the need of more painstaking and detailed study of the language from a purely grammatical point of view, also the need of a more complete grammar which treats the language with strict regard for historic development and resulting changes. The difficulties which would present themselves to one undertaking such a task we can as yet realize only in part. For instance, the correct application of the rules thus far laid down for the language of the letters is difficult enough and too much care cannot be exercised in their mastery in order to avoid what might become serious mistakes. Thus the specific rules for the Assyrian do not apply and must be carefully excluded in the translation of a

Babylonian text, and vice versa. But it becomes still more difficult to decide how far these rules, which are so rigidly observed in the language of the letters, are to be applied and taken into consideration outside this class of texts. In explaining a difficult form in a hymn, for instance, is, or is not, this or that phenomenon in the language of the letters to be compared as analogous and made to solve the problem for us? The question is really pertinent, as I have a definite instance in mind where in my opinion a rule taken from the language of the letters was wrongly made to apply in a text not of this class. It may be tempting enough to try to explain a form by every known means; it is another question if this be always permissible, for it is evident at the outset that not the same rules would apply for the language of the Hammurapi period in Babylonia and for that of the Ašurbanipal period in Assyria.

But on this very point I think we have one of the most difficult problems before us, this difficulty, namely, that the character and approximate date of a text should be known before it can be successfully worked out. In other words a certain amount of textual criticism will become necessary to determine which rules can be made to apply and which not. I do not claim that we as yet are in a position to cope successfully with the problem of textual criticism in Assyrian, but it is my conviction that it must be taken up sooner or later and that the letter literature in this very particular will prove an invaluable aid and provide a sure basis for further work.

But the letters, picturing as they do the language of their time in Assyria and Babylonia both consistently and in detail, put other texts from the same period in a strange light, and we are immediately confronted by the peculiar difficulties which the problem of textual criticism in Assyrian would present. I shall refer briefly to the historical inscriptions of the later kings to illustrate.

Tiglath-Pileser I of Assyria (1115—1100) has in his inscriptions side by side *ištu* (a form hardly in use any more at his time), *altakan*, *lultakširu*, *ultallitu*, *multašpiru* (specifically Babylonian forms), and *madatta*, *epāš*, *laššu* (Assyrian).

Tukulti-NIN. IB. II (889—885) has likewise side by side *aštamdiḥ* (old form), *ulteziz* (Babylonian), *asapar*, *asakan*, *attaḥar*, *laššu*, *battubatte* (Assyrian).

Ašurnaširpal II (884—860) has *itti* (Babylonian) and *issi* (Assyrian), *ištananuma* (old form), *altakan* (Babylonian), *asakan*, *asarap*, *usišib*, *attaḥar* (Assyrian).

Šalmaneser II (859—825) has *amdaḥḥiṣ* (Babylonian) and *madatu* (Assyrian).

The Sargonide kings have in their historical inscriptions been more successful in fixing what we might call a classic language, but even here we meet with strange inconsistencies. Sennacherib has *aštakan* (old form) and *ultu* (Babylonian). Ašurbanipal has *ušteššera*, *aštakanu*, *išten'ā* (old forms), *multarḥu*, *ultu*, *mundahṣē*, *mandattu* (Babylonian), and *madattu* (Assyrian).

The inscriptions of the Babylonian kings present similar difficulties. Nebuchadnezzar I (1152—1124) has *ištu*, *ištakan* (old forms), *ulteshir*, *iltaknu*, *iltatru*, *mundahṣūti* (later Babylonian). Nebukadnezzar II (604—562) uses a language which seems to show none of the later Babylonian peculiarities, but which might very well have been used at least 1000 years earlier.

Intimate acquaintance with the language of the epistolary literature, where the most beautiful consistency prevails throughout, causes us to wonder all the more at the strange mixture of old and late, Assyrian and Babylonian, forms in the other branches of the literature. Hence the question of textual criticism in the Assyrian presents peculiar problems of which I have only mentioned a few. In closing I would ask one question: what bearing would this condition of things in the language of texts, where we cannot doubt that we have the originals, have on textual criticism in other languages, for instance the problem of the different dialects in the language of Homer?